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Agent Adherence versus Occupancy

Occupancy and adherence are two different measurements, and often go in opposite directions. Adherence to schedule is within the control of individuals. Occupancy is not; as it is driven by random call arrival, call type, size of the agent group and other variables. Agents have no control over the volume of calls or when they will arrive.

Occupancy is defined as the percentage of time agents handle calls (talk time plus after call work AHT) versus waiting for call arrival. For a half-hour the typical calculation is:

Call volume x average handling time in seconds/number of agents x 1800 seconds = %

Occupancy ratios will vary based on the size of the call center. A large call center will show higher occupancy rates than those of the smaller center because call volume is generally higher in the larger center and there is little down time for the agents. In essence, an agent can be 95% adhered to their schedule, but have an occupancy rate of 65%. They are logged on according to their schedule yet call volume is low.

Adherence refers to how well agents adhere to their schedules. Adherence to schedule generally consists of all logged-on time, including the time spent waiting for transactions to arrive, talk time, after-call work, and placing outbound calls or other non-call work. True adherence is not just having agents logged on for the amount of time required, but logged on when required.

A simple calculation to determine adherence is:

$$\frac{\text{Total Minutes in Adherence}}{\text{Total Minutes Scheduled}} = \%$$
$$\text{Scheduled Minutes} = \text{Hours in Shift-Lunch-Break(s)+Exceptions}$$

Exceptions can be meetings, training, or other activities. While the above calculation provides a measurement for overall adherence to schedule, the missing data is whether the agents adhered to the scheduled time for lunches and breaks. Depending on how schedules are prepared (minimum flexibility), if one or two agents are not adhering to the schedule, service levels will be affected. It is important to keep in mind that there will be instances when an agent is on a call that cannot be completed exactly at the time they are supposed to go to break.

There are no real industry standards for either of these measurements and much depends on the activity of the individual center. In a busy center it is common to see Occupancy rates in the 80's to low 90 percent brackets. A good range for adherence would be 90% and above. Data for adherence to schedule and occupancy typically comes from ACD reports and/or workforce management systems.